

Classroom Surveys

By Susan Niemeyer

Are you looking for an activity that involves individual students, creates classroom unity and cooperation, encourages peer feedback, integrates speaking, listening, and academic skills meaningfully and purposefully, and minimizes teacher preparation and correction time? Look no further than classroom surveys.

The following survey unit has been very successful with conversation classes of low-intermediate university students. With a class of thirty students, this entire unit usually fills three 50-minute periods with an additional ten minutes in a preceding class. However, it can easily be adapted for students of various ages and proficiency levels by varying the types of questions as well as class sizes and by changing the number of questions and the team sizes.

Procedure

Before the unit begins: Have the students brainstorm questions on a high interest topic such as music, family life, or travel. Then choose ten questions or sets of questions appropriate for a class survey. Typical questions about sports might include the following: "What is your favorite sport to watch? Why?" "How many hours do you usually play sports each week?" and "Have you ever been or are you currently a member of a sports team? Which sport? When?"

Class 1

Divide the students into ten teams, each with three members. Give each team a slip of paper with only one of the ten questions. Those three students are then responsible for interviewing every member of the class. To facilitate this stage, form three large groups A, B, and C with one member from each of the smaller teams. Group A, for example, would have ten students, each with a different question. These ten students must then ask, answer, and record each other's questions and responses (35-40 minutes). Next, the students return to their original teams to compile their results. For example, in response to the questions, "If you could be an excellent athlete in one sport, which sport would you choose? Why?" the following might be possible answers:

Name of Sport	Percentage	Reasons Given
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Baseball	30%	popular sport in Korea, want to play professionally
Basketball	25%	very fast-moving, exciting
Soccer	15%	Korea will co-host World Cup in 2002

Skiing	10%	fashionable
Swimming	10%	like water sports can enjoy with
Tennis	5%	boy/girlfriend
Figure skating	5%	graceful, beautiful

To increase the challenge and interest, the students can break down the results according to gender, age, or other demographic characteristics.

For homework, each team should prepare to present its results and a short summary to the entire class. All team members should take part in the presentation.

Classes 2 and 3

Begin the second class period by briefly focusing on the importance of word stress. Emphasize the stress of numbers (fifteen vs. fifty) and the words "present" and "percent" by having the students listen to and practice phrases and sentences such as "sixteen persons" and "seventy percent of the class is female" (5-10 minutes).

Now, the ten teams are ready to report to the entire class. While each team is speaking, the rest of the class should take careful notes. To encourage clear and accurate speaking, do not allow the presenters to use the blackboard or visual aids of any type. Encourage the listeners to ask the speakers to clarify or repeat misunderstood information. As the teacher, make sure that you resist the urge to intervene and "help" speakers who speak too softly or quickly, mispronounce words, or fail to present information logically and clearly. The presenters must help each other answer the listeners' questions until everyone is fully satisfied. At the end of each class period, give a short open-note quiz or collect the listeners' notes (80-90 minutes).

After all groups have presented, fill up any remaining time in the third class period by discussing general class trends as well as any surprising results.

Teacher Feedback

Little time is necessary to check the quizzes or to spotcheck the listeners' notes. Because the listeners usually ask the speakers numerous questions, their quiz answers or notes are generally quite accurate. Likewise, you do not need to give specific feedback to the speakers. Through the frequency and types of questions asked by the audience, the presenters can determine for themselves how successfully they have communicated.

Writing Practice

While I use this unit primarily to encourage speaking, listening, and note-taking skills, writing activities can be added. Students can summarize their own team's results or general class trends, report about their own personal habits and interests, create a typical student profile, or make and reflect upon predictions about various questions.

Conclusion

I recommend conducting class surveys at the beginning of the semester or school year as they promote a friendly atmosphere in which students learn about each other and work together to reach a common goal. All students, even the most hesitant, enjoy and benefit from this meaningful, stimulating, and supportive learning activity.

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